

## **FAMILY IS EVERYTHING**

It was Princess Diana who said, “Family is the most important thing in the world.”

For parents of an Autistic or intellectually challenged child, they know this all too well. Family is everything.

When you have a disabled child living at home, it is the family’s responsibility to care for that child, not only in their day-to-day living but in finding external resources that add to their quality of life. This can be a struggle and a constant balancing act. Especially, when you have other children in the home who also need your attention.

“There are no state or federal programs to take the place of family,” John Q. tells us.

John has an adult Autistic daughter who lives with him. According to John, she’s on the Autistic spectrum, but is not physically disabled. Although she does have some repetitive behaviors.

“When she was young, she could become irritated and agitated very easily,” he tells us.

That forced John to put her in a private school designed to help manage her behavior. Now that she’s an adult, however, that behavior has subsided, and she can even work part-time. And yet, she still needs help with things like her medications, transportation to and from work, filling out forms, and managing her weight.

“Nobody knows her like I do,” John says. “We understand each other. We’re family.”

John’s primary goal is to make sure she gets what she needs. But that entails a constant review of her report criteria from a variety of agencies. That’s not something she can do alone.

“There is really nothing other than parents and family to worry about taking care of people like my daughter,” John says.

Of course, then the question becomes, who takes care of them when the family is gone.

“It can be really sad,” John says. “That’s what we’re trying to change with NDL.”

Neuro-Diverse Living (NDL) is working hard to raise the money needed to acquire property to build the kind of co-housing units that will not only give disabled adults like John’s daughter a safe and secure place to live, but the amenities to raise their quality of living.

“Maintaining a quality of life equivalent to what they lived at with their family is the challenge,” John says.

And that’s NDL’s goal – to create an inclusive environment that allows higher functioning adults with Autism or other intellectual disabilities to live within their community, work if they are able, and to have a social life.

“That would be the best I could ask for – to have someone there to be like family. To remind her of the things she needs, watch out for her, and add to the quality of her life.”

It was Margaret Mead who said, “Never believe that a few caring people can’t change the world. For, indeed, that’s all who ever have.”

That’s what parents like John are doing – trying to change the world for adult children with Autism. To give them a life they deserve. One where they are safe from scammers and predators, one in which they can make their own contribution to society, and one that will give their parents peace of mind that someone will care for them long after they are gone.

“That’s the story,” John says. “Who is going to take care of these folks when their parents aren’t there anymore? Who will be their family?”

With your support, Front Porch Cohousing by NDL will.